

SENATE No. 466

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Cynthia Stone Creem

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the passage of the accompanying bill:

An Act relative to holocaust victims insurance relief.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Cynthia Stone Creem	First Middlesex and Norfolk
Susan C. Tucker	Second Essex and Middlesex
Karen E. Spilka	Second Middlesex and Norfolk
Kay Khan	11th Middlesex

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. S00582 OF 2007-2008.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand and Nine

AN ACT RELATIVE TO HOLOCAUST VICTIMS INSURANCE RELIEF.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

CHAPTER 175K

HOLOCAUST VICTIMS INSURANCE

Section 1. The general court hereby finds that:

(a) During World War II, untold millions of lives and property were destroyed.

(b) In addition to the many atrocities that befell the victims of the Nazi regime, insurance claims that rightfully should have been paid out to the victims and their families, in many cases, were not.

(c) In many instances, insurance company records are the only proof of insurance policies held. In some cases, recollection of such policies' very existence may have perished along with the Holocaust victims.

(d) Many documented Holocaust survivors are living in Massachusetts today. Many of these survivors and their descendents have been fighting for over 50 years to persuade insurance companies to settle unpaid or wrongfully paid claims. Survivors are asking that insurance companies come forth with any information they possess that could show proof of insurance policies held by Holocaust victims and survivors, in order to ensure that closure on this issue is swiftly brought to pass.

17 (e) Insurance companies doing business in the commonwealth have a responsibility to
18 ensure that any involvement they or their related companies may have had with insurance
19 policies of Holocaust victims are disclosed to the commonwealth and to ensure the rapid
20 resolution of these questions and to eliminate the further victimization of these policyholders and
21 their families.

22 (f) The international Jewish community is in active negotiations with responsible
23 insurance companies through the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims
24 to resolve all outstanding insurance claims issues. This chapter is necessary to protect the claims
25 and interests of Massachusetts residents, as well as to encourage the development of a resolution
26 to these issues through the international process or through direct action by the commonwealth,
27 as necessary.

28 Section 2. For purposes of this chapter, the following words shall have the following
29 meanings:-

30 "Commissioner", the commissioner of insurance.

31 "Division", the division of insurance.

32 "Holocaust victim", any person who was persecuted during the period of 1929 to 1945,
33 inclusive, by Nazi Germany, its allies, or sympathizers.

34 "Insurer", an insurance company doing business in the commonwealth, or whose
35 contacts in the commonwealth satisfy the constitutional requirements for jurisdiction, that sold
36 life, property, liability, health, annuities, dowry, educational, casualty, or any other insurance
37 covering persons or property to persons in Europe at any time before 1945, directly or through a
38 related company, whether the sale of the insurance occurred before or after the insurer and the
39 related company became related.

40 "Proceeds", the face value or other payout value of insurance policies and annuities plus
41 reasonable interest to date of payment without diminution for wartime or immediate postwar
42 currency devaluation.

43 "Related company", any parent, subsidiary, successor in interest, managing general
44 agent, or affiliate company of the insurer.

45 Section 3. (a) The commissioner shall establish and maintain within the division a
46 central registry containing records and information relating to insurance policies of Holocaust
47 victims, living and deceased. The registry shall be known as the Holocaust Era Insurance
48 Registry. The Attorney General, in coordination with the division, shall establish appropriate
49 mechanisms to ensure public access to the registry.

50 Section 4. (a) Any insurer currently doing business in the commonwealth that sold life,
51 property, liability, health, annuities, dowry, educational, or casualty insurance policies, directly
52 or through a related company, to persons in Europe, which were in effect between 1920 and

1945, whether the sale occurred before or after the insurer and the related company became related, shall file or cause to be filed the following information with the commissioner to be entered into the registry:

(1) the number of such insurance policies;

(2) the holder, beneficiary, and current status of such policies; and

(3) the city of origin, domicile, or address for each policyholder listed in the policies.

(b) In addition, each insurer subject to subsection (a) shall certify to any of the following that:

(1) the proceeds of the policies described in subsection (a) have been paid to the designated beneficiaries or their heirs where such person or persons, after diligent search, could be located and identified;

(2) the proceeds of the policies where the beneficiaries or heirs could not, after diligent search, be located or identified, have been distributed to Holocaust survivors or to qualified charitable nonprofit organizations for the purpose of assisting Holocaust survivors;

(3) a court of law has certified in a legal proceeding resolving the rights of unpaid policyholders, their heirs, and beneficiaries, a plan for the distribution of the proceeds;

(4) the proceeds have not been distributed and the amount of those proceeds.

(c) An insurer who certifies as true any material matter pursuant to subsection (b), which the insurer knows to be false, is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be subject to the penalty set forth in section 5.

(d) An insurer currently doing business in the commonwealth that did not sell any insurance policies in Europe prior to 1945, shall not be subject to this section if a related company, whether or not authorized and currently doing business in the commonwealth, has made a filing under this section.

Section 5. Any insurer that knowingly files information about a policy required by this chapter that is false shall, with respect to that policy, be liable for a civil penalty not to exceed \$5,000. Such penalties shall be appropriated to the division to be used by it to aid in the resolution of Holocaust insurance claims.

Section 6. The commissioner shall suspend the license or certificate of authority to conduct insurance business in the commonwealth of any insurer that fails to comply with the requirements of this chapter until such time that the insurer complies with this chapter.

Section 7. (a) Notwithstanding the provisions of any general or special laws to the contrary, any Holocaust victim, or heir or beneficiary of a Holocaust victim, who resides in the

86 commonwealth and has a claim arising out of an insurance policy or policies purchased or in
87 effect in Europe before 1945 from an insurer described in section 2 may bring a legal action to
88 recover on that claim in any superior court of the commonwealth for the county in which the
89 plaintiff or one of the plaintiffs resides, which court shall be vested with jurisdiction over that
90 action until its completion or resolution. (b) Any action brought by a Holocaust victim or the
91 heir or beneficiary of a Holocaust victim, whether a resident or nonresident of this state, seeking
92 proceeds of the insurance policies issued or in effect before 1945 shall not be dismissed for
93 failure to comply with the applicable statute of limitation, provided the action is commenced on
94 or before December 31, 2015.

95 SECTION 2. The commissioner shall adopt regulations to implement chapter 175K of
96 the General Laws within 90 days of its effective date.

97 SECTION 3. Section 4 of chapter 175K of the General Laws shall take effect 180 days
98 after the passage of this act.

99 SECTION 4. The commissioner of insurance shall enforce section 6 of chapter 175K
100 of the General Laws 210 days after the passage of this act.

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